

DRIFT.

SANCTUARY-ARREST FOR DEBT.

LIKE all the dispensations of the earlier English Church, the right of "sanctuary" was so distorted from its original conditions that it proved a contention, grievance, point of quarrel, and stumbling-block between the ecclesiastics and the laity, especially the feudal chiefs who held any law rather cheap. The privilege, which had belonged to every church during the earlier ages of Christianity, of sheltering the criminal, originated, says the editor of the *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, at a time when every man went armed, when human life was little valued, when it was considered meritorious to avenge upon the spot every wrong, imaginary or real, when the opportunities of escape from the pursuit of justice were many, when the law indeed was slow of foot and weak of hand. It was a revival of that earlier law which had provided a place of refuge "that the slayer might flee thither that should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past, and that fleeing thither he might live." What the cities of refuge had been to the Jew, the Church was to the Christian.

As the power of the Church waned, this immunity as a consequence was disregarded, nay, was set aside altogether. In the days of Richard the Second, John of Gaunt, the fourth son of Edward the Third, by his Queen Philippa, "feudal to the core," and a staunch friend of the reformer John Wiclif, openly violated the privi-

lege of the celebrated sanctuary at Westminster. The story is not generally known, and Mr. Shirley tells more fully than the chroniclers the main points of it in his introduction to the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum* (*Bundles of Tares*) *Magistri Johannis Wielif*.

In one of the Spanish campaigns of the Black Prince, two esquires, named Hauke and Schakel, had taken prisoner the Count de Denia, a relation of the reigning house of Castille. He had agreed to pay a certain ransom, and, returning to Spain, had left his eldest son as a hostage in his place. John of Gaunt, who in right of his wife was now laying claim to the crown of Castille, found that the possession of the young count's person would aid his design. He therefore offered the esquires a price for their prisoner, which was refused. Foiled in this, he put forward some claims on the part of the crown; and demanded that in the mean time the prisoner, who was the subject of litigation, should be secured in the Tower. He again met with a refusal. He then procured an act of Parliament ordering the committal of Hauke and Schakel to the Tower if the prisoner were not produced. This was in the session of one thousand three hundred and seventy-seven. But he was destined still to be baffled. The young count, from loyalty either to his native sovereign or his captors, remained concealed on parole, and Hauke and Schakel went to the Tower. Soon after, however, the two prisoners appear to have become alarmed for their safety. They escaped from the Tower, and took sanctuary at Westminster. To the sanctuary, accordingly, the duke followed them. On the morrow of St. Lawrence, August 11th, 1378, in the very middle of high mass, one of his retainers, Ralph de Ferrers, entered the sacred precincts with forty armed men, killed Hauke on the spot, and took Schakel back by force to his prison. Terror at the wild outrage seems to have been the first feeling of the bishops; but at length the archbishop summoned courage to unsheath the sword of St. Peter, and, with five of his suffragans, publicly excommunicated the authors, enactors, and abettors of the sacrilege. Moreover, the archbishop petitioned the "first estate," the king in parliament, "that satisfaction and amends to God and the holy Church, and to the parties damaged thereby, be fully done." A chapter of certain "doctors in theology of canon and civil law," aided by the justices, defined the privilege of sanctuary. In their decision (see *Rolls of Parliament*, Petition No. 27, vol. iii. p. 37) they laid down a law which affected by far the greater number of those who sought this privilege to protect themselves from the secular authorities. The doctors determined "that neither in case of debt, account, nor trespass, if the man should not lose life or limb, did the holy Church grant immunity." And, besides, they say that neither God, nor pope, nor king, nor prince could grant such a privilege. And, indeed, could any prince see fit to grant such a privilege, the Church, which is the fount and nourishment of all virtue, could not accept such a privilege whence sin or

fault, or the occasion of sin or fault, could arise, "*gar pocche est et occasion de pecche pur delaier une Homme voluntrifment de son dette et jouste recoverir del soen.*" This exemption of arrest for debt had evidently for some time been felt as a grievous infliction by the community at large. In the same year, as part of the reply to another petition, specially concerning the particular sanctuary of Westminster, it is declared that the charter of King Edgar and two charters of St. Edward (the Confessor) were examined, and found to contain no such privilege as exemption from arrest for debt by privilege of sanctuary. "But, nevertheless, for the especial affection that the king bore to Westminster than to any other place in his kingdom, and notoriously for the reverence to the noble body of St. Edward, and the other great relics there (such as the veil and some of the milk of the Virgin, the bladebone of St. Benedict, the finger of St. Alphage, the head of St. Maxilla, and half the jaw-bone of St. Anastasin), and because his noble progenitors lie there, his Majesty declares that they who by losses at sea, fire, robbery, or other mischief, without fraud or collusion, shall be so impoverished that they cannot pay what they owe, and enter the sanctuary of Westminster to avoid imprisonment, shall be freely and safely allowed to remain, with immunity for their persons, so that meanwhile they may be enabled to make terms with their creditors." A pretty wide loophole, forsooth! wide enough to let any number of debtors creep through, and return to the shelter which the Church as the "fount, &c.," couldn't hold out to those who wished "*delaier une homme voluntrifment*" of what they owed him, allowing them, besides, as a graceful joke, the contingency of their being able "to make terms with their creditors." This freedom from arrest for debt in the precincts of sanctuary was, however, an unsettled point elsewhere. The abbot of St. John of Colechester and the abbot of Abyndon, in his town of Culneham, in Oxfordshire, anno 1393-94, claimed franchise, privilege, and immunity of all manner of people coming and fleeing within the precincts of their said abbeys, for debt, detention, trespass, and all other personal actions. They were bidden to attend before the council, and declare their privileges and immunities.

So grossly, moreover, was "sanctuary" abused, that in the fourth year of King Henry the Fourth (1402-3) the Commons petitioned the king and council against the sanctuary of St. Martin's-le-Grand.

On the very ground now occupied by the Post-office stood a large and fair college, founded A.D. 700. William the Conqueror confirmed all its privileges in 1068, making it independent of every other ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and from regal and even papal control. By a statute of the time of Edward the Third, I find, in Strype's edition of Stow, that, "in proof of its tuition the judge that sitteth there for the King, as in a place not of the City, but by privilege separate (the Mayor not called thereto, as he is to the deliverance of Newgate and other such Acts in

the City), to have knowledge there in a case of Treason or Felony, hath ever from time that no mind is, sitten in the gate of the said sanctuary. And the person appeached or indicted of Treason and Felony, hath been kept by the officers on the further side of the street afore him, to the intent that he come not of the other side of the Channel, towards the Sanctuary there, to claim the liberty and Franchises of the same."

And now for the condensed remonstrance of the unhappy citizens against this hornets' nest, as it had become in the very heart of the City, and within the shadow of the frown of Guildhall itself. The petition ran to the following effect: "That divers persons of divers estates, apprentices and servants, dwelling in the City of London and its suburbs, as well as other people of the realm, repairing to the City, some in the absence of their Masters, day by day, flee with the goods and chattels of their masters to the College of St. Martin le Grand in London," to live at their pleasure on these goods and chattels, without execution of the temporal law, and that they are received and sheltered there, and that these same goods and chattels are seized and taken as forfeit by the servants of the said college. Debtors of all sorts also take refuge there. Forgeries of bonds, indentures, acquittances, and other muniments are perpetrated by many of its inhabitants, who there ensoul them with the names, as well of many merchants and people dwelling in the said City, as well as others of the said realm, to their disinherment and final destruction. Merchants and victuallers are defrauded of their wares, mercery, merchandise and victuals: for when these merchandises are once received in the sanctuary, the sellers can neither get them back, nor the payment for them. "And in which College from time to time are received murderers, traitors, as well as clippers of money of the King's coin, thieves, robbers, and other sorts of felons, evil doers, and disturbers of the King's peace, skulking thro' the day, and at night issuing to commit their murders, treasons, larcenies, robberies, and felonies, both within and without the franchise of the City." The law is stopped of its course by the privileges of the college. And, therefore, for the better keeping of the king's peace within the City and the kingdom, a gracious remedy is prayed, and that conviction and punishment may follow the crimes before the king's justices, notwithstanding any privilege claimed, saving the liberties of the holy universal Church of England. Take, however, as a taste of the style, this last paragraph of the prayer: "Que please a vostre haute Regalie, considerantz les meschiefs & malfaitz avantditz & que pees & tranquillite deinz la dite Cite & aillours deinz votre dit Roialme le mielx puissent estre gardez, per assent des toutz Estatz d'icest present parlement, & per auctorite d'icell ordagner gracious remedie, per ensi que ley & execution d'icell de cy en avant soit fait sur les ditz meffaisours en la dit College habitantz, ou en apres a ycell fuantz, devant les juges temporelx du dite Citee, come le cas requiert es

lieux as tieux cases purveux & ordeigne, noun-obstantz ascuns maniers privileges ou Libertees per le dit College claymez. Salvez tant soulement les Libertees de Sainte Eglise universele d'Engleterre." The answer is, that "they are to show their privileges before the king's council, and a reasonable remedy shall be made."

OUR EYE-WITNESS AT GLOUCESTER.

"Hm as gives most shall have my vote."

This was the ever-reiterated burden of the song sung by many mouths in the Shire Hall at Gloucester. This the chorus which rose in the court all day long. This the sordid screech which echoed to the very rafters of its roof.

For your Eye-witness has (of course) been present at the Election Inquiry instituted by the Commission at Gloucester; that inquiry of which the reader has heard so much, and in the course of which so many strange and disheartening particulars have been disclosed to the public. He takes Gloucester as a case in point. It happens to be the case readiest to his hand. He might, for the demerits of the case, have taken Wakefield, or other places quite-as bad.

The Eye-witness is sorry for Gloucester, and mourns over its corruption very sincerely. Its inhabitants are, as far as he saw, a polite race, though a venal, and the town itself is a fine old place, and has an old-fashioned, comfortable look, very pleasant to those who still enjoy the sight of a stage-coach (the E.-W. saw one with four horses) or an old post-chaise painted yellow.

Truly Gloucester is a wonderful and misleading city, a city which you walk about and examine carefully, and dispose of in your own mind as a combination of an ordinary agricultural capital, and a cathedral town, till you happen to see a man in complete maritime costume turning down an obscure lane which apparently ends in the county gaol. You follow this mariner, saying to yourself, "And why a sou'-wester hat, why a blue flannel Jersey, why these canvas trousers in Gloucester?" Why? Follow the seaman but a little bit further and you will see. You will see, suddenly appearing as in a dream, long ranges of warehouses with cranes attached, endless intricacies of dock, miles of trunk-road, wildernesses of timber in stacks, and huge three-masted ships wedged into little canals, floating through flood-gates with no apparent means of propulsion, and without a sail to bless themselves with. And it is this extraordinary inland port which you had disposed of so easily as a quiet cathedral town, and you are surprised that a city capable of such a piece of deception should lend itself to bribery and corruption.

Let the reader beware of another deception. The E.-W., arriving in the evening, fell into an excess of rapture at what he took to be the tower of the cathedral, but which turned out to be four gigantic poplars planted close to the railway station, evidently with a view to mislead the public.

The wonders of this dissolute capital are not exhausted yet; far from it. The Eye-witness, emerging from his hotel on the first day of his stay in Gloucester, found a great crowd of young country girls and lads assembled at that part of the city which is called the Cross, where the four principal streets meet: a sort of Forum where most of the business, and a great deal of the gossip, of the place are discussed. These youngsters of both sexes were perfectly provincial in their appearance, and the lads especially, so much so as to remind one at once of Mr. Buckstone's inimitable "get up," in the Rough Diamond. A burning thirst for information being one of the characteristics of your Eye-witness, he at once applied to that most anomalous of characters, a country policeman, with a frock-coat and a walking-stick, and asked to be enlightened as to the cause of this great gathering. This question was asked and answered twice before the E.-W. would believe that the provincial policeman had said that it was the Mop, or, as the officer pronounced it, the Mope-day. Three consecutive Mondays are set apart once a year on which the farm servants come in from the country to be hired, the men accompanied in many instances by their friends and the girls by their mothers. It is a pretty sight enough, and one which the Eye-witness would recommend (as having some reference to the breathing and moving world) to the attention of our artists, as far as he may venture to make a suggestion on a subject of which he knows nothing.

By the time that your Eye-witness had gained the information on the "mop" affair, and had noted that Gloucester, having in it a cathedral capable of providing church accommodation for the whole county, has besides, as a matter of course, about fifty other supplementary parish churches—by the time he had remarked this circumstance, which is the case in all cathedral towns, it was time for him to set off for the Shire Hall, where the Election Commission which he was bound to attend was held. He only stopped once on the way; it was to wonder at the admirable strain of irony in which the proprietor of a large sugar-plum shop spoke through a printed hand-bill in his window of a certain neighbouring brandy-ball vendor who had set up in opposition round the corner. He little knew, he said, speaking of his opponent's honour—"he little knew how much of this valuable quality he possessed, and that *it hung about him like feathers about a pig!*" The writer communicates this comparison to the literary world with great glee, pleased to think that he is enriching their stock of images with so new and chaste a simile.

The Shire Hall of Gloucester is a most embarrassing place to get into. Not, indeed, for want of doors, but rather from a too great plenty of these means of entrance. The Court in which the Election Commissioners were sitting, is a semicircular apartment in the interior of the hall, and round the whole half-circle which encloses it are set the most puzzling and repelling

doors that can be imagined, for they are all labelled as the different entrances by which every kind of person may be admitted, except an Eye-witness. The E.-W. went in great distress of mind from one of these sacred doors to another: "'Judges' door.' That won't do, I am not a judge; neither am I a grand jurymen, for whom I see this next entrance is set apart. Here is another for petty-jurymen, but I am not even a petty jurymen. Let me try another: 'Bailiff.' No, not so bad as that either. 'Magistrate.' No. 'Witnesses.' Stop, that will do. I am a witness, most decidedly—an Eye-witness. This is evidently my entrance."

Acting on this rash conclusion, and abandoning himself as his manner is to his destiny, the writer of this report opened the door, and, descending a flight of steps, found himself in a gloomy cell, and face to face with another provincial policeman. The following brief dialogue then took place; the E.-W. abandoning himself, as has been said, to his destiny, and to the fun of the moment:

P. P. Are you a witness?

E.-W. Yes, an Eye-witness.

P. P. A hi-witness! Who b'ye for?

E.-W. I'm for All the Year Round.

P. P. Which side's that?

E.-W. Why the right side, of course—always.

P. P. But there bea'n't no right side; they're all wrong sides here.

Hearing this fearful announcement, the Eye-witness promptly withdrew, and returned once more to the corridor, and the rows of doors. "What am I to do?" said the E.-W. to himself again, "I am not a judge nor a jurymen, nor a bailiff, nor a counsel, nor a mayor of Gloucester, nor apparently a witness. I have evidently no right in this court, unless, by-the-by, that little door at the end, which I have not yet tried, should answer my purpose. Let me examine it: 'Nisi Prius.' What's that? I dare say that's the entrance, after all. Perhaps I am a Nisi Prius—it's impossible to say."

This door gave the Eye-witness instant admission to the court, and taking the first seat he could find, he muttered to himself, "Then I am a Nisi Prius, as I supposed; and I have been living in the world all this time, and never found it out!" Even now the Eye-witness's troubles were not all over, for, finding himself the object of general attention in the court, and that much whispering was going on of which he appeared to be the subject, he looked behind him, and saw in enormous characters the words "Under-Sheriff" inscribed upon the back of the seat over his head. To say that the E.-W. cowered out of his seat, would hardly express the rapidity with which he slunk away from this conspicuous position; taking the most obscure corner he was able to find, he had at length leisure to look about him, and see what was going on.

Perjury, evasion, shuffling, inappropriate mirth, and shameless acknowledgment of shameful practices—these were some of the things that were going on. Marvellous revelations of syste-

matic bribery, and of the existence of firms established for the purpose of carrying elections on any terms—terms, generally, which the M.P. elect had better not inquire into too closely. Mystery—nobody knowing anything about anybody. Members of Parliament applying for mysterious messengers to carry mysterious sums of money to obscure inns, where mysterious assistants of the mysterious messengers pack up the money in parcels, and hand them over to furtive surgeons, who come in secret to fetch them away. Prescriptions, medicine, money, all mixed up and involved in such a sordid tissue of deceit and villany, that no man can sift the thing perfectly, no man unravel altogether so tangled a mesh, nor walk through the dreary labyrinth of lies, the clue of which is guarded so carefully from his grasp.

To report the evidence which the writer heard given at the Shire Hall on the different occasions of his attendance there would be simply to recapitulate what has already appeared in the different public prints, and an admirable report of which may be found in the Gloucestershire Chronicle, the principal local paper. The province of your Eye-witness seems rather to note any peculiarities which struck him during the progress of the case, to give the impression left on his mind by what he has seen, and heard, and read, and the conclusion he has been able to arrive at. These impressions shall be set down much as he finds them in his notes, so that this paper may be as much as possible like a sketch from nature, and may be said, in some degree, to have been written in the Court of Gloucester.

The story of a pure election in this ancient city is quite a hard thing to come at. The oldest inhabitant, when placed in the witness-box and desired to ransack his memory, beginning at 1816, can only say that he thinks before the Reform Act the bribery was more indirect, that he thinks the elections of '32, '33, and '35 were comparatively pure. The indirect bribery before the Reform Act was shown in the employment of bands, messengers, clerks, and flag-bearers, and also in swearing in so many special constables to keep the peace, that finding there was no peace to keep except their own, they used to take to fighting with each other in order to decide what was the best manner of attaining this desirable object. The money spent on elections now, is a mere joke to what was disbursed in those good times. In 1816 the sum of forty thousand pounds was laid out on an election, and no wonder when seven hundred special constables (they might happen to be voters, perhaps, one or two of them) were sworn in to keep the peace at five shillings a day. This oldest inhabitant thinks that the first decidedly and undisguisedly impure election at Gloucester was that of '37, when he considers that his side was bought out of the market, ninety votes having gone out of their possession in the first three-quarters of an hour of the poll. This gentleman, in concluding his evidence, said that he thought the venality less the fault of those

who took the bribe than of those who offered it, and that if the candidates on both sides would agree to give nothing but the necessary expenses there would be no difficulty in putting down bribery.

Turning from these comparatively ancient elections to that with which we are now concerned, and examining briefly its history as it comes out before the Gloucester Commission, it will be found that the tale so elaborately unfolded is simply this: As the period of the election of 1859 approaches, the Liberal party in Gloucester, anxious to secure another member to their side, in addition to their usual representative, Mr. Price, despatches a deputation to London, the members of which have for their object the discovery of some suitable person holding Liberal politics and a supporter of the ballot, who will consent to stand for Gloucester. The deputation, after paying sundry night visits to a great political club in Pall-mall, after some mystery and bandying about from pillar to post, and callings again, gets at length to be introduced to a certain Mr. Monk, a son of a former Bishop of Gloucester, and therefore a likely man enough to have a chance of election in a city which was once under his father's pastoral care. After many pros and cons, and after much consulting of political friends, Mr. Monk consents to resign his pretensions to the agricultural borough of Cricklade, and to come down to Gloucester and contest the coming election with Sir Robert Carden, who is represented to be hugely unpopular in the city. So far all is plain and tolerably straightforward, but from this point the obscurity becomes impenetrable and the intricacy of the web something perfectly hopeless. From this point everybody is to manage Mr. Monk's affairs except Mr. Monk. From this point, so completely is Mr. Monk superseded by Mr. Moffatt (an ex-M.P.), by Sir William Hayter (an existing M.P.), by Mr. Ralli (Mr. Monk's father-in-law), and by many other persons, that one arrives at last at the conclusion that Mr. Monk himself must have passed his time in what Roman Catholics call a "retreat"—not opening his own letters, and finding the day to hang quite heavily on his hands. About this period of affairs, too, a certain cheque for five hundred pounds (in an envelope) makes its appearance, whose career it is quite impossible to follow, though it is as well to try. First, Mr. Moffatt asks Sir William Hayter if he knows a responsible person who will take a cheque for five hundred pounds (in an envelope) down to Gloucester. Then Sir W. Hayter asks one Webb (who serves one Gilbert, who is a parliamentary agent) the same question; then a new man, a Mr. Parkes, "who is in the habit of passing Sir W. Hayter's lodgings," comes upon the carpet, and gets mixed up with the cheque (and the envelope). To him enters another man, called Thompson, or Thornton, who, making application for the cheque (and envelope), and showing secret credentials, is entrusted with the same, and all becomes from that moment an entanglement of Moffatt,

Hayter, Thompson or Thornton, cheque, envelope, Parkes, and privacy, till the brain can stand it no more.

After the arrival of Thompson or Thornton at an hotel near the railway station at Gloucester, the evidence brought before the commissioners is more easily made out, and the machinery by which the commission works (tracing the money from the man who brings it down to the agents who disburse it, and thence to the voters who are to be bribed, examining each in turn) becomes sufficiently obvious. A person named Wilton, a surgeon at Gloucester, visits this man Thompson at his inn under pretence of prescribing for him, and, carrying away the money which the other has brought with him, distributes it in small parcels to the agents who are to come into actual communication with the electors, and to give them the money for their votes. Of course more money is soon wanted in addition to our favourite five hundred pounds, and strange, indeed, are the particulars which come out as to the secret correspondence of the agent at Gloucester with his principal in London, and an extraordinary revelation is brought about of the existence of firms whose business is election bribery, and servants of these firms who are nothing better than professional bribers, and whose function it is to conduct at elections all that dirty work which it is better the virtuous representative of the people should know nothing about.

And what is Sir Robert Carden about all this time? Suppose we let him tell his own tale, just as the writer heard him in the witness-box. We have told Mr. Monk's story for him, Sir Robert shall speak for himself.

Sir Robert Carden, a grey-headed, stalwart gentleman, tall and sturdy—Sir Robert Carden, standing erect in the witness-box, looking boldly about him, and betraying his nervousness only by a certain devil's tattoo of finger on the rail which surrounds him—Sir Robert Carden, answering the difficult questions something as a man does when playing at proverbs—is yet made to commit himself to the following statements: That in 1857 a deputation waited upon him from Gloucester, and represented to him that the Conservative party was gaining force in that city, and that in the event of his consenting to stand, there seemed every chance of his securing the election. Sir Robert Carden had no connexion with Gloucester at all, but we are not to suppose for a moment that the Conservative party in the town had heard of a certain election which once took place at St. Albans, and, knowing the value of money in the contest at Gloucester, thought that the gentleman who had shown the extent of his pecuniary resources at St. Albans would be the very man for them. This never crossed their minds—it is extraordinary, by-the-by, how few things *did* cross the minds of the different witnesses who gave their evidence in the Shire Hall; they appear all to have been the most innocent, unsuspecting, thoughtless fellows imaginable. And if all, surely most of all, Sir Robert! He thought Gloucester so pure

a borough that it seemed to him an honour to represent it. He asked the deputation, when it waited upon him, what would be the probable cost of the election, and was told between five and six hundred pounds; yet when his expenses (the petition included) came to upwards of *four thousand* pounds, he asks no questions, suspects no bribery, looks into no statements, and has received no account of the expenditure to this day. He had implicit confidence in his agent, and would have paid more still, if he had been asked. And pray, Sir Robert Carden, is it your practice, in other matters of business, to pay away these large sums without looking into the accounts? No, only at elections. And after paying all this money, Sir Robert still thought this election of 1857 a pure one till he heard of the evidence which had come out before the commission. Certainly this gentleman is of an unsuspecting nature; the election of '57, the hideous revelations that came out at St. Albans, all these things are thrown away upon him, and he comes down in 1859 still guiltless of any suspicion of corrupt practices, still confiding in the Gloucester electors, still ready to disburse his money to the amount of two thousand four hundred and ninety-five pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence, and all not paid yet. He had said to his agent, "Anybody who renders me a service, pay them liberal," but had never been told that it would be necessary to resort to bribery; and if he had known of the corrupt practices which took place in '57, would, he solemnly declares, never have stood in '59! Once more he reiterates that he had implicit confidence in his agent, and now he adds, that he wishes he had not had so much confidence in him, that it would have been better that he should have required an account of the expenditure that had taken place, and that he hopes Mr. Lovegrove (which is the agent's name) will account for it all honestly.

Having now got our candidates to Gloucester, it may be interesting to observe some of the chief characteristics of a thoroughly impure election; the system adopted by the local agents, the manner of its carrying out, and some of the chief points, both ludicrous and flagitious, which come out in the extraordinary process called "working an election." The first thing to be done is, for the candidate, or more probably some nameless friend who "acts for him" (whose generic title, at Wakefield, appears to be 'The Man in the Moon'), to appoint an agent in the town where the election takes place, and the next thing is for all parties to have implicit confidence in each other, or, in other words, to ask no questions. The candidate, then, or his Man in the Moon, sends for the agent, places the affair in his hands, and asks no questions; then the agent sends for some gentleman well known as not being troubled with scruples, hands over to him certain sums of money and asks no questions; then the gentleman without scruples sends for a number of other gentlemen without scruples, hands the moneys over to them to disburse in the expenses of the election, and asks no ques-

tions. Here, unfortunately, this admirable system of "asking no questions" is at an end, for it appears that these lower ministers, in the actual working of the election, are obliged to ask a great many questions. They go into people's houses and ask whether they are behindhand with their rent, and how much will clear them? And then they say that they think they know a party who will "shell out" to the amount required, and they do not ask for a vote in return, far from it, but they are sadly afraid that the party aforesaid, who has strong political feelings, will not "shell out" to anybody who does not agree with him that Carden, or Monk, as the case may be, is the man for Gloucester. Nor are these the only questions that are asked. Sometimes a gentleman is discovered at tea, and is asked if that beverage is sweet enough, and, if not, how many lumps of sugar he will take in it; an innocent demand enough, unless it should turn out that the lumps of sugar mean lumps of gold, and that his tea will not be sweetened unless he plumps for Price and Monk.

Examining the proceedings of these minor agents in the "working of the election," we shall find that, were it not that the excessive seriousness of the subject makes it almost a sacrilege to laugh at anything connected with it, it would be impossible not to enjoy in an excessive degree the highly humorous performance of some of the lower actors in the ghastly melodrama.

The comedian who expressed himself as having taken so much refreshment that he was "on a running fuddle" all through the election; the apparently maddened fly proprietor, who stated that he had not been between the sheets at the time of the election for twenty-six days and nights, and who, with exquisite naïveté, wished there had never been an election, and *hoped* there would never be another; the witness who said that when he was offered 10*l.* for his vote, Mr. Monk (the candidate), who was standing near, on hearing money talked about, "very properly" walked away; the henpecked gentleman whose wife had received the bribe, and who said the attorney "didn't give it to me, he gave it to she, and she's missus and master too;" the honourable voter whose principles are worth 2*l.*, since he had rather vote for Price and Monk at 8*l.* than for Carden at 10*l.*; all these are humorists of a high order, and worthy to rank with that lawyer who said that if the election had been carried on on the purity dodge, everybody knows he would have had nothing to do with it; or that ingenious family who got 50*l.* among them for their votes, including 3*l.* for a dead man who had voted on the same terms at previous elections—"post mortem!"

But what are all these to our pet witness, Jacobs? Jacobs, the general factor, who begins his evidence at once by saying, "I received 177*l.* from Mr. John Wilton, and expended it in bribery," and who adds immediately that the first money he paid was 3*l.*—the only legitimate payment he made—to Mr. Moses (!) for coming from Liverpool to vote. This comedian, after recounting several exploits in bribing, says,

"The next man—if I can call him a man—vash run William Merrittsh. He had 5*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* to vote for Price and Monk. I had to vatch him very close; he told me he should quarter on the enemy, as Mr. Lovegrovesh vash crazy after him." Jacobs sometimes meets with a voter who is troubled with a conscience, such as Mr. Welsh, who will not speak, but holds up five fingers, by which he means five pounds, then says he never takes the money, but on the ingenious Jacobs proposing to play a game of skittles or to jump with him for the amount, finds his conscience at ease. Mr. Welsh, too, is so scrupulous that he requests that the money may not be put into his hand, but may be left on the chimney-piece at a certain public-house where he can find it; and, finally, this conscientious personage, after receiving one pound in this manner, is bought over by the enemy, and votes for Carden. It was the opinion of Mr. Jacobs that this Welsh was "a Uriah Heap sort of man," and, indeed, he does not come out altogether in an estimable character. When Jacobs offers to pay his day's expenses if he will vote on the Liberal side, he answers that a man "ought to have more than a day's work to change his mind." Upon this the wily Jacobs changes his tactics, and wisely determines to get Mrs. Welsh over to his side. "There were some nice little childrensh playing about," he says, "and I takes up run of 'em and gives it a shilling; then the goot woman vash up and says her husband shall take two or three poundsh less from us. I paid her five pounds, and she vent and bought pigs with it; but," adds the pork-abhorring Jacobs, "I did not give it her for *that*." Our good friend, with all his cunning, is sometimes, as the wisest of us may be, sadly taken in. "I now come," he goes on to say, "to three bad lots, Frederick Vingate, Thomas Vingate, and Thomas Knight. I had lots of trouble with those men. Their prices vash too high. They talked a deal of nonsense, and said they wanted fifteen poundsh a man; I told 'em I could not and would not give it; upon which they said they could get it upon the other side, and he put upon the committee, and all sorts of nice things. On the morning of the poll they sends to me and says, 'Vell, there is humbugging on the other side,' and I gave 'em six poundsh each, and after all they threw me over the bridge." Jacobs is proud of his philosophy, and when a voter whom he has been hawking after goes over to the enemy, and shouts aloud as he passes him in the street, "A plumper for Carden!" our good friend says, "He meant it to annoy me—but it did not." There is no end, however, to Jacobs, and we must cut him short most reluctantly, at once.

A word or two, now, on witnesses and witness-boxes.

There are few more embarrassing positions in the world than that of a witness in a witness-box. Elevated high above the heads of his audience, railed in as in a sort of pen, conscious that all eyes are fixed upon him, the witness becomes in almost every instance a confused and guilty-looking being, and all the more so if he

tries to look jaunty and unembarrassed. The one great object which it is desirable for a witness to attain is the power of keeping still. Let him not writhe, let him not attitudinise, let him by no means run his hand through his hair, let him keep his eye fixed on the person who is examining him, and haply he may manage to avoid looking like a pickpocket. Even at best there is so much in position, that the writer was surprised, on meeting in the street one or two of those witnesses whom he had seen examined, to note that they really looked like rather respectable men, and did not appear, as they did in the witness-box, to have two or three murders at least, weighing on their minds. While on this subject, it may be as well to mention that short witnesses have great advantages over long ones, being more sheltered by wood-work, and less bare and exposed in their appearance than those gifted with taller proportions.

The Eye-witness saw some wonderful and memorable things in connexion with the witness-box in the Shire Hall, at Gloucester, to some of which he now invites the reader's attention. There was the carpenter and "jyner," as he called himself, who moistened his palms as he ascended the rostrum, as if he were going to plane his way through his evidence. There was the lady with gloves and a veil, who was in business, and had no evidence to give on the particular matter in hand, but was quite ready to launch into many interesting statements on things in general, and especially with regard to her own affairs; and indeed in this, and in protestations of future amendment and never doing anything wrong again, all the witnesses were profuse. Then, there was the disconsolate witness, who sighed as if his heart would break between each answer; the conceited witness, who, seeing that his words were being taken down by the short-hand writer, waxed eloquent, and stopped long between his sentences, glancing down at the writer aforesaid, to see that one paragraph was finished before he began another. In addition to these, there was the witness who brought documents, and in the course of his narrative, continually put his hand in his pocket for appropriate and corroborative papers, but never found them till his tale had got long past the place where they would be of any use. Nor must we omit the witness who *would* look at anybody in court whom he happened to mention in his evidence; and besides the witness whom his friends in remote corners of the building *would* prompt, there was the man who had forgotten his part, and who deliberately appealed to his friends for assistance, saying, "In the year—I say, George, what year was it when Lightpocket lost the election for mayor?"

It was a remarkable thing, and one which perhaps proves that every man ought to have a profession, that no man who after being sworn was asked what he was, and answered that he was a "gentleman," failed to look like an ass when he said so. And this is indeed a wretched way of describing a man who has nothing to do, implying that he who has a profession is not a

gentleman, and infinitely inferior, in every way, to the Italian designation, "possedente," or the French "rentier." It is noteworthy, too, that a man sitting in court, and occupying a position between the examiner and the witness who is under examination, will not uncommonly look dreadfully confused and infinitely wretched when he hears his own name brought in in the evidence, and his own affairs discussed over the very top of his head. The Eye-witness hopes it will not be misconstrued into want of respect for the fair sex, if he says that, in addition to the things already mentioned, he was also struck by the extreme reluctance of those wives of voters who had received a bribe for their husbands, to hand the same over to their worse halves on their return from business. The man whose wife had declined to part with the money she received, and who stoutly maintained in consequence that he had not been bribed at all, was a sharp fellow enough, and a close and astute reasoner.

There are some more witnesses yet, who must not be dismissed without a word. There was the man who did not know whom he had voted for, and who, in the wildness of his confusion, when he complained of the badness of his memory, put his hand to his stomach, as if that were the seat of the quality in question; there was the man who asked to be examined to relieve his mind, and who had had nothing to do with the election at all; there was the man who began an anecdote, and repenting of it, gave it up as not connected with the subject (an opinion in which the commissioners entirely coincided); there was the man who ascended the box like a clergyman coming into the pulpit, pressing his papers down heavily, arranging his handkerchief as if for a long speech, and being cut short almost before he had begun; lastly, there was the poor old attorney, all in black, with black gloves, and a high black mohair stock, whose appearance, as he held on to the sides of the witness-box, moved to an excess the pity of your Eye-witness, so that it was quite a relief to him when he heard that the poor old man had done no harm after all.

It would be an interesting thing to examine, did space permit it, how the question of an extended franchise is affected by what has recently transpired in connexion with the subject of election bribery, and how far, by increasing largely the number of electors, we should be rendering such bribery impossible. That the mere fact of giving larger numbers of the humbler orders a voice at elections will not be the means of abolishing corrupt practices is rendered sufficiently obvious by what has come out at Gloucester, where witness after witness of the lowest class proclaimed his own venality from the box, and where the words with which this article begins rang in one's ears all day. It may, indeed, be a question whether this is the case to so full an extent in our manufacturing towns, and whether the readiness to sacrifice gain to a principle (however mistaken) which has shown itself in the circumstances of the "strike," does not indicate that, in the class of intelligent workmen at any rate,

there exists an element to which bribery would appeal in vain.

Your Eye-witness, thinks it right to mention his belief that the main local actors in the Gloucester election were influenced, and influenced almost solely, by political motives. We in London have little idea of what politics are in the provinces, or, to use their own phrase, how "high they run." Here is a town like Gloucester, with its two political clubs, the Conservative and the Reform; here are men risking their professional prospects, in many instances paying money out of pocket (the writer heard this himself in evidence); here are instances of lawyers bestowing an amount of labour and time upon an election which, given to anything else, would have ensured a fee of three times the amount which the election brought in; here is a member of that profession which, of all others, requires the most, in its followers, an unsullied name—that of medicine—here is a surgeon, risking his practice, and owning that he has done what is detrimental to his personal prospects, and even to his success in life! And all this, surely not for the paltry profits of the election, but from political feeling and prejudice. Politics are in a country town almost like a religion, and an election acts on the place like a Revival.

This is the case with only the chief actors in this drama. With the rest, what is it? A race—a tearing, headlong race for gold—or for silver, as the case may be. The voluntary sale of a constituency; the barter of a seat in Parliament for so much money; a town indifferent as to who represents it, as long as it may but claw at the money, and which would feel disfranchisement itself more because it lost a marketable commodity than because it was declared to be unworthy of a great and sacred trust.

Sitting in that court, and watching the proceedings closely, it was impossible not to feel ashamed and pained to an excess, to see grey-headed citizens, and townsmen high in office, sitting in their places pale with apprehension, standing in the witness-box proclaiming their own misdeeds, or retiring from it abashed and crestfallen like chidden schoolboys. Well might that innocent perjurer, whose words we have already quoted, say that he wished there had never been an election, and hoped there would never be another; and well might a rustic, seated in the court behind the Eye-witness, turn to his mate and say, "I say, Jack, 'honesty's the best policy,' after all."